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Some old Wells



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Some Old Wells
❧ Trees and ❧
Travel-tracks of
Wordsworth's
❧ Parish ❧

AMBLESIDE
THE ST. OSWALD PRESS



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SOME OLD WELLS
TREES AND
TRAVEL-TRACKS OF
WORDSWORTH'S
PARISH

BY
GEORGE MIDDLETON

*“Whatsoever things are pure,
whatsoever things are lovely,
. think on these things.”*

AMBLESIDE
THE ST. OSWALD PRESS
1918

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OLD WELLS

Peace to the sober Matron who shall dip
Her pitcher here at early dawn ;
. to the tottering Sire
For whom like service, now and then his choice,
Relieves the tedious holiday of age :
Thoughts raised above the Earth while here he sits
Feeding on sunshine ; to the blushing Girl
Who here forgets her errand, nothing loth
To be waylaid by her betrothed.

Wordsworth.

In Grasmere's widespread parish of fell and dale are many spring-wells, some of which, from their picturesqueness and associations, are worthy of protection and veneration.

Pure water being essential to life and comfort, it may be inferred that right from man's first appearance upon the earth sweet fountains drew him to their brink. Here and there in the parish a well is found inside an old house, presumptive evidence that the spring was so valued as to determine the site of habitation.

Before the human mind comprehended the nature of sun, moon and stars, and of thunder, lightning, cloud, fire, water and wind, these heavenly bodies and terrestrial elements and phenomena were regarded as spirits. To early

man ~ who "spake as a child, understood as a child, thought as a child" ~ these spirits, with their numerous offspring, were very real; for weal or woe one or another was ever facing or pursuing him. They formed the basis of a system of belief and worship; thanks to fable and old-folk story, their vagaries are more vivid to us than are the activities of those who conceived them. At that remote time ~ imagination unrestrained by science ~ were born the teeming hosts of amiable and of malevolent supernatural beings: those fairies and legendary images that danced about our infancy and that Knowledge has not yet quite banished from our groves, becks and wells.

Monuments at hand remind us that Druidism superseded or supplemented this species of Nature-faith; then dawned an era bright with

"The sweet and natural hopes that shall not die
Long as the sun his gladsome course renews,"

and Churches and Monasteries ~ some majestic, others lowly ~ sprang up abundantly. If the country ever enjoyed a spell of spiritual unity,

"When all were ready for their faith to bleed,
But few to write or wrangle for their creed,"

that golden period must be assigned to a few centuries in these Middle Ages.

In Old England, before the introduction of coaches and railways, wayfaring ahorse and afoot was far more prevalent than in modern days. Though in the age gone by progress may have been tardy in some directions it was go-ahead in others; amongst noteworthy developments were foundations in plenty where the hand was opened wide unto the poor and unto needy travellers. Many monastic houses were planted on the chief routes so that journeyfolk, whether on pilgrimage or not, might at convenient intervals procure refreshment and a night's rest ~ free. A single hospice often entertained several hundreds at once. Among the guests were usually to be found minstrels, story-tellers and merry-men ~ a guarantee that the hours of candle-light were passed without overmuch solemnity. These havens comforted deserving wayfarers innumerable, but they ultimately led to a large increase of idle rovers. Only the energetic well-to-do could undertake the adventurous journey to the East to behold

" Those holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd
For our advantage to the bitter cross,"

so numerous hallowed places in the Homeland became commonly - esteemed alternatives; and when sunny Red-letter Days drew nigh

" Then longen folk to go on pilgrimages,"

and roads swarmed with the Church's flock ~ toddlers to totterers ; hale, sick, lame ; raiment shabby, raiment gay ; the glad and the sad ~ and followers, aiming for this or that Shrine, Reliquary or Holy Well.

Holy wells were dotted all over the land ; most of our ancient towns possessed one or more, and it was not uncommon to find one in a vill or even at some reposeful spot miles from any dwelling. A well became holy through having been devoted to the ministration of Baptism in pioneer days, or by association with some saint, or through miracles having been wrought thereat. One of more than local repute, named after St. Oswald, was situated at the foot of Silver How in a field fronting The Wray, Grasmere. It could be quickly reached from the road that passes over Red Bank to Chapel Stile. Being known as a Holy Well from time immemorial, its dedication may date as far back as the age of St. Oswald himself. This king is one of the most gracious figures in early English Church history. During his perambulatory mission, hand-in-hand with St. Aidan, the spring may have been resorted to as a preaching-station and for the baptizing of converts. Until quite recent times the water for the Baptistery of the neighbouring Parish Church was always brought from this well, which seems to

support the tradition that baptisms at first were there solemnized. For the comfort of parishioners, and mayhap of pilgrims from afar also, a paved way, "The Pavement," ran from the Church to the well's vicinity. Near the middle of last century, with the object of evening the land's surface and winning a few square yards of pasture, the rude masonry about the well was removed and the cavity filled up and turfed. Thus was effaced for ever a charming picture illustrating the first phase of the dalesfolk's Christian life. At this destruction we grieve; but at the same time have cause to rejoice that, as by miracle, there is preserved to us on Rothay's bank a precious memorial, practically intact, of the second phase—Grasmere's old-world Mother Church of St. Oswald.

Wayside wells that invited man and beast to quench their thirst were prized by the people of the great days of the Church's rise. Every such fount was furnished with a chained metal drinking-cup; and any vagabond polluting either cup or water, "against our crown and dignity," was liable to punishment prompt and rigorous.

Here and there was a well that the local community believed to be haunted. Fitful shadows, the silent flight of a nocturnal bird, moving cattle, all vaguely seen in the night gloom; or

erie sounds from the wind and from invisible creatures ~ in a superstitious age these were often misunderstood and connected with the spirits of characters concerned in some away back sad occurrence. Other wells enjoyed a more pleasing though equally romantic reputation, being the rendezvous of fairies for their merry "at homes." In the peace of moontide swains and maidens would steal nigh to these enchanted places to vow fidelity and wish good wishes.

Wells with sacred traditions appealed to the heart with something of the power of the Cross. In this connection it is fitting to recall that a Cross in a market-place was not merely a rallying-column but primarily a symbol to solemnly warn sellers and buyers to practise honesty according to Christian principles. Doubtless the Cross in a mart tended to sway traders to righteousness' side, even as the surviving legal custom "Kiss the Book" sways affirmants to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

The simplicity of life and simplicity of faith of those who walked this isle before us must be considered if we would appreciate the old well devotion. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the

Father" ~ to Christians of the past, so sang every fountain. Each well has its own wonderful story. Though the blessing "cometh down from the Father," what hidden devious course does it run? Here is mystery. Broadly, it may be assumed that a spring that weakens during a dry season is the result of leakage from a beck or rivulet, or drainage from a marsh or water-logged land; and one whose flow is unaffected by the longest drought has its rise at some tarn "uplifted high among the mountains" or great subterranean reservoir. In both cases the source may be near or miles away. Comparison by analysis of water from a well with that from a suspected birthplace affords no reliable clue; in the passage through rock-systems and subsoils some ingredients must be lost and others gathered.

A goodly number of wells that the Bible has made familiar to the whole world continue to refresh the traveller and his camels in a parched land. With us the tap ~ fed from tank, reservoir or beck-pool ~ has eclipsed the homely spring; and wells that cheered generations "from God sent forth" who have "again to God returned" are, alas, neglected and passed by without a tender look or thought. But there are exceptions. At Tissington, in a lovely part of Derbyshire, are

five historic wells. Celebrating an olden-time custom, on Holy Thursday of each year these wells are gayly dressed with rushes, ferns, flowers and wildweeds manifold, and a brief service is held by their side followed by another at the Church. The festival draws a multitude of Nature's children, old and young from near and far, who manifest heart-delight in thus shaking hands with the past. And as if Preston repented of longtime forgetfulness of its holy "little fountain," known as Ladye Well from the reign of Henry IV., the town's clergy and populace determined on reviving a Mediæval religious custom and marched by the thousand in bannered procession to Ladye Well on Sunday, 15th September, 1912, with resolve to repeat the pilgrimage in future years.

These two instances of well-love refer to places rather far afield. However, in Grasmere parish there is at least one well accessible to the public that is reverently watched over and tended ~ "our rocky well" of Dove Cottage. Could it be otherwise when it is remembered that Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy loved it so dearly and so industriously adorned it with "chosen plants and blossoms" from fell and mere's marge? The Poet's abounding affection for his cot and its little domain,

"The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,"

is expressed with rare charm in *A Farewell*, composed in 1802 just before setting out on his marriage journey. This poem "that will not die" must evermore dispose kindly natures to treasure the old well nestling among gypsy flowers in the "little nook of mountain-ground."

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
For two months now in vain we shall be sought ;
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;
Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the lake we brought
And placed together near our rocky well.

Wordsworth.

NAB WELL

When Wordsworth removed from Grasmere and took up his abode at Rydal Mount, in 1813, he at once became on more familiar terms with an old friend smiling a few yards beyond his grounds ~ the spring issuing from Nab Scar on the high side of the Terrace leading to Grasmere. This spring-well supplied the residents of the upper part of the hamlet with water for the brewing of tea and other domestic uses. The escape is caught on the path's low side, forming a sister well for the benefit of cattle.

After the Poet had settled at the Mount he became ruefully conscious of dilapidations, a

decayed roof being the most serious failing. In times of storm, wind and rain forced their way through crevices, much to the discomfort and harm of the tenants. Oft-repeated appeals to the owner for repairs seemed to fall on deaf ears. In 1826 the climax of endurance was reached, and Wordsworth determined to flit unless the house was forthwith made reasonably habitable. Happily defects were remedied, but not before all hope had been given up and the longsufferer had relieved his heart in a poem entitled *Composed when a probability existed of our being obliged to quit Rydal Mount as a residence*. Surrounded by so many "loved possessions," it is noteworthy that on this occasion Nab Well engrossed the Poet's mind. The poem was first published in Professor Knight's *Life of Wordsworth*, and, by permission kindly granted, is here reproduced :~

The doubt to which a wavering hope had clung
Is fled ; we must depart, willing or not ;
Sky-piercing Hills ! must bid farewell to you
And all that ye look down upon with pride,
With tenderness embosom ; to your paths,
And pleasant dwellings, to familiar trees
And wild-flowers known as well as if our hands
Had tended them : and O pellucid Spring !
Unheard of, save in one small hamlet, here
Not undistinguished, for of wells that ooze
Or founts that gurgle from yon craggy steep,

Their common sire, thou only bear'st his name.
Insensibly the foretaste of this parting
Hath ruled my steps, and seals me to thy side,
Mindful that thou (ah ! wherefore by my Muse
So long unthanked) hast cheered a simple board
With beverage pure as ever fixed the choice
Of hermit, dubious where to scoop his cell ;
Which Persian kings might envy ; and thy meek
And gentle aspect oft hast ministered
To finer uses. They for me must cease ;
Days will pass on, the year, if years be given,
Fade ~ and the moralising mind derive
No lessons from the presence of a Power
By the inconstant nature we inherit
Unmatched in delicate beneficence ;
For neither unremitting rains avail
To swell thee into voice ; nor longest drought
Thy bounty stints, nor can thy beauty mar,
Beauty not therefore wanting change to stir
The fancy pleased by spectacles unlooked for.

Nor yet, perchance, translucent Spring, had
toll'd

The Norman curfew bell when human hands
First offered help that the deficient rock
Might overarch thee, from pernicious heat
Defended, and appropriate to man's need.
Such ties will not be severed : but, when we
Are gone, what summer loiterer will regard,
Inquisitive, thy countenance, will peruse,
Pleased to detect the dimpling stir of life,
The breathing faculty with which thou yield'st

(Tho' a mere goblet to the careless eye)
Boons inexhaustible ? Who, hurrying on
With a step quickened by November's cold,
Shall pause, the skill admiring that can work
Upon thy chance-defilements ~ withered twigs
That, lodged within thy crystal depths, seem bright,
As if they from a silver tree had fallen ~
And oaken leaves that, driven by whirling blasts,
Sunk down, and lay immersed in dead repose
For Time's invisible tooth to prey upon.
Unightly objects and uncoveted,
Till thou with crystal bead-drops didst encrust
Their skeletons, turned to brilliant ornaments.
But, from thy bosom, should some venturous hand
Abstract those gleaming relics, and uplift them,
However gently, toward the vulgar air,
At once their tender brightness disappears,
Leaving the intermeddler to upbraid
His folly. Thus (I feel it while I speak),
Thus, with the fibres of these thoughts it fares ;
And oh ! how much, of all that love creates
Or beautifies, like changes undergo,
Suffers like loss when drawn out of the soul,
Its silent laboratory ! Words should say
(Could they depict the marvels of thy cell)
How often I have marked a plummy fern
From the live rock with grace inimitable
Bending its apex toward a paler self
Reflected all in perfect lineaments ~
Shadow and substance kissing point to point
In mutual stillness ; or, if some faint breeze
Entering the cell gave restlessness to one,

The other, glassed in thy unruffled breast,
Partook of every motion, met, retired,
And met again. Such playful sympathy,
Such delicate caress as in the shape
Of this green plant had aptly recompensed
For baffled lips and disappointed arms
And hopeless pangs, the spirit of that youth,
The fair Narcissus by some pitying God
Changed to a crimson flower ; when he, whose pride
Provoked a retribution too severe,
Had pined ; upon his watery duplicate
Wasting that love the nymphs implored in vain.

Thus while my fancy wanders, thou, clear Spring,
Moved (shall I say ?) like a dear friend who meets
A parting moment with her loveliest look,
And seemingly her happiest, look so fair
It frustrates its own purpose, and recalls
The grieved one whom it meant to send away ~
Dost tempt me by disclosures exquisite
To linger, bending over thee : for now,
What witchcraft, mild enchantress, may with thee
Compare ! thy earthly bed a moment past
Palpable to sight as the dry ground,
Eludes perception, not by rippling air
Concealed, nor through effect of some impure
Upstirring ; but, abstracted by a charm
Of my own cunning, earth mysteriously
From under thee hath vanished, and slant beams
The silent inquest of a western sun,
Assisting, lucid well-spring ! Thou revealest
Communion without check of herbs and flowers

And the vault's hoary sides to which they cling,
Imaged in downward show ; the flower, the herbs,
These not of earthly texture, and the vault
Not *there* diminutive, but through a scale
Of vision less and less distinct, descending
To gloom imperishable. So (if truths
The highest condescend to be set forth
By processes minute), even so ~ when thought
Wins help from something greater than herself ~
Is the firm basis of habitual sense
Supplanted, not for treacherous vacancy
And blank dissociation from a world
We love, but that the residues of flesh,
Mirrored, yet not too strictly, may refine
To Spirit ; for the idealising Soul
Time wears the features of Eternity ;
And Nature deepens into Nature's God.

Millions of kneeling Hindoos at this day
Bow to the watery element, adored
In their vast stream, and if an age hath been
(As books and haply votive altars vouch)
When British floods were worshipped, some faint
trace
Of that idolatry, through monkish rites
Transmitted far as living memory,
Might wait on thee, a silent monitor,
On thee, bright Spring, a bashful little one,
Yet to the measure of thy promises
True, as the mightiest ; upon thee, sequestered
For meditation, nor inopportune
For social interest such as I have shared.

Peace to the sober Matron who shall dip
Her pitcher here at early dawn, by me
No longer greeted ; to the tottering Sire,
For whom like service, now and then his choice,
Relieves the tedious holiday of age ~
Thoughts raised above the earth while here he sits
Feeding on sunshine ; to the blushing Girl
Who here forgets her errand, nothing loth
To be waylaid by her betrothed : peace
And pleasure sobered down to happiness !

But should these hills be ranged by one whose
soul
Scorning love-whispers shrinks from love itself
As Fancy's snare for female vanity,
Here may the aspirant find a trysting-place
For loftier intercourse. The Muses crowned
With wreaths that have not faded to this hour
Sprung from high Jove, of sage Mnemosyne
Enamoured, so the fable runs ; but they
Certes were self-taught damsels, scattered births
Of many a Grecian vale, who sought not praise,
And, heedless even of listeners, warbled out
Their own emotions given to mountain air
In notes which mountain echoes would take up
Boldly and bear away to softer life ;
Hence deified as sisters they were bound
Together in a never-dying choir ;
Who with their Hippocrene and grottoed fount
Of Castaly, attest that Woman's heart
Was in the limpid age of this stained world
The most assured seat of

And new-born waters, deemed the happiest source
Of inspiration for the conscious lyre.

Lured by the crystal element in times
Stormy and fierce, the Maid of Arc withdrew
From human converse to frequent alone
The Fountain of the Fairies. What to her,
Smooth summer dreams, old favours of the place,
Pageant and revels of blithe elves ~ to her
Whose country groan'd under a foreign scourge ?
She pondered murmurs that attuned her ear
For the reception of far other sounds
Than their too happy minstrelsy, ~ a voice
Reached her with supernatural mandates charged
More awful than the chambers of dark earth
Have virtue to send forth. Upon the marge
Of the benignant fountain, while she stood
Gazing intensely, the translucent lymph
Darkened beneath the shadow of her thoughts
As if swift clouds swept o'er it, or caught
War's tincture, 'mid the forest green and still
Turned into blood before her heart-sick eye.
Erelong, forsaking all her natural haunts,
All her accustomed offices and cares
Relinquishing, but treasuring every law
And grace of feminine humanity,
The chosen rustic urged a warlike steed
Toward the beleagured city, in the might
Of prophecy, accoutred to fulfil,
At the sword's point, visions conceived in love.

The cloud of rooks descending through the air
Softens its evening uproar towards a close

Near and more near ; for the protracted strain
A warning not unwelcome. Fare thee well !
Emblem of equanimity and truth,
Farewell ! ~ if thy composure be not ours,
Yet as thou still when we are gone wilt keep
Thy living chaplet of fresh flowers and fern,
Cherished in shade though peeped at by the sun ;
So shall our bosoms feel a covert growth
Of grateful recollections, tribute due
To thy obscure and modest attributes
To thee, dear Spring, and all-sustaining Heaven !

From 1813 to his last days ~ a period of thirty-seven years ~ Wordsworth's pitcher was borne daily to Nab Well for his favourite beverage. In the declining season of his life the young daughter of the neighbouring Hart Head farmer became the link between the well and the Mount. This fair water-bearer (Mrs. Tyson) passed away at Rydal in the spring of 1915, having reached her eighty-eighth birthday.

Wells bedight with indigenous wildings always pleased the Poet ; and Nab Well grew in loveliness because of his attachment and caressing touch, "What a nice well that would be if all that rubbish was cleared off." This observation on some well not specified was ventured to the Poet himself by a labouring man. Commenting, the great Nature-lover says : "The '*rubbish*' was

some of the most beautiful mosses and lichens and ferns and other wild growths that could possibly be seen. Defend us from the tyranny of trimness and neatness showing itself in this way !”

Many whose lives have been sweetened by contact with Wordsworth pass and repass Nab Well little dreaming that it was once so precious to their teacher’s heart. It now presents a sad, forsaken, unrespected look ; no pitcher dips to move it to merriment. Its last devotee ~ Mrs. Warriner, mother of the aforementioned water-bearer ~ departed long ago. Yet it is not a ruin ; the masonry is in good order ; and (if the owner consented) the old beauteous features might be restored with little interference. Three or four layers of sods on the roof would provide a good bed for grass and perchance for a few wild flowers also ; and a fern or two introduced about the base might complete the dressing so far as the human hand is concerned. The rest might be left to the will of Nature. If there are any leaks caused by cattle pounding the ground an application of clay would repair the damage. Then, once again of winsome countenance and re-established in favour, the “pellucid spring” could be safely consigned, in the Poet’s words,

to the care

Of those pure minds that reverence the Muse.



In August, 1841, Wordsworth was visited by James Patrick Muirhead, a connection of the Watts and Boultons. In a ramble the poet took Muirhead to Mab Well - "This," (pointing to the well beside which we stood) used to be a well here, and it had a wild rose bush with its red blossoms growing over and beside it; ~~now~~ but now they have taken away that, and it is only a stream to others - to me it is still the well, with the roses of other days, and I ~~have~~ see no alteration since. I made my poem on it of old. But come and see my terrace garden." - Blackwood, June 1927.

OLD TREES

How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold ?
Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold ;
And so the grandeur of the Forest-tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mould
But from its *own* divine vitality.

Wordsworth.

A great Wych-Elm ~ the one referred to more fully hereafter ~ graces the meadows of Amble-side's plain. There is no pretence of claiming it as a phenomenon ; nevertheless the Elm is truly great both in magnitude and beauty. Blending so charmingly with surrounding features, passers-by are beguiled into comprehending the prospect as a whole and rarely study the tree apart, for its own sake. It seems hard to realize that anyone can fairly eye so inspiring an object without "vital feelings of delight" ; yet recently a villager, upon surveying this identical Elm, denounced it as "an ugly tree that ought to be cut down !"

Shortly after this pitiful reflection a fringe of palm-trees was being felled in the same valley. The husbandman was pleaded with to spare at

least a member here and there so that some vestige of the old loveliness might be preserved. The cutter's retort: "You know, we cannot live by looking at things!" Happily, out of respect for the sentiment of others, to the man's credit, some of the condemned trees were reprieved.

Again: A Sycamore at present in its prime towers from the road-marge in Church Street, Ambleside, giving life and a beauteous rustic appearance to that quarter of the village. A century ago, or a little more or less, it was planted in a parrock near to the boundary fence by the then parson-schoolmaster the Rev. William Sewell. About 1880 the street was widened for prospective building. When operations began, a number of residents interested themselves in the tree's preservation, and it was saved, so many hoped, to gladden future generations of villagers and visitors as it had gladdened generations already departed. Growing where originally set, it is now a conspicuous feature of the expanded thoroughfare and allows seventeen feet less an inch of fairway to vehicles. In its neighbourhood four bye-roads open into the street ~ on the one hand two new ones and on the other (the Church side) a new and an older one, all much younger than the tree. At this perilous spot our Sycamore is stationed, warning betimes drivers all and sundry to travel

cautiously, with the result that so far not a single serious accident has happened there. Isolated at the parapet's side and easy to see as a lighthouse the verdurous sentinel is ever on point-duty, proving more effectual than any Bobby. Regretably, a few inhabitants view this tree with ungracious eyes and agitate for the axe to be laid about its roots, arguing that there is an abundance of trees not far off, and moreover that with this one out of the way traffic might move more expeditiously. But "menders and enders" overlook one or two aspects that matter vitally: the sacrifice of this Sycamore would transform what is lovely into the unattractive; and, as Church Street begins with a short steep hill followed by a long length of gentle declivity, temptation for wheels to be driven furiously would be increased ~ a very real danger considering the assemblage of concealed roads.

Change - mania sometimes sweeps over the country in bold waves, again and again carrying enterprising talent in the direction of mischief. In past progressive eras fort-bars, crosses, ecclesiastical buildings and historic "obstacles" manifold were demolished. How do the people of to-day look upon most of these clearings? ~ never a nod. And now the coming of the road-swift and the sky-clipper has so affected some

natures that marring of the scenic charm of our countryside is becoming sadly frequent.

To give a better understanding of life and to widen their sympathies, children at last are being encouraged at elementary schools to observe and love birds, beasts, flowers and trees. As a fine tree is more wondrous, more beautiful and more instructive than any achievement of man's hands can be, we may be sure that those who follow, because of ever-increasing knowledge, will appreciate the Creator's designs more than we do. Then, when a striking example is at our door, inviting intimacy, why smite it? If we do, are we saner than the militant suffragettes who with hatchet slash our art treasures?

" Old tree, the storm still brave !
And, woodman, leave the spot."

Instances such as these, taken at random, show that even in this fair region, where love for trees of character and comeliness might be expected to be all-pervading, there appear odd souls impassive, or that respond but feebly, to the chime of Nature ~ listless to the Voice that entreated a generation of "little faith" to "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow," and that declared "Man shall not live by bread alone."

At the same time it is gratifying to know that

not a few rural folk are deeply susceptible to the joy of tree-fellowship and bemoan the disappearance of choice examples. When the whirlwind overthrew the goodly Sycamore that lifted its massy crown high above the housetops on Smithy Brow, as well as the giant tree, likewise a Sycamore, that grew at Wanlass Lane corner striking Lake Road, many sighed, conscious "that there had passed away a glory from the earth." Neither of these neighbourhoods has recovered its old charm.

THE STOCK WYCH-ELM

Possibly this booklet may be picked up by some pilgrim who so far has walked his way unimpressed when God's rooted legions, gay in bud and bell, enlivened the vale with their Springtide swell of praise. If at last tempted to more sympathetic familiarity, we will, about sundown for preference, conduct such a one haply not to a Holy Land wayside lily but to the stately Wych-Elm springing from the bank of Stock Beck at the bottom of Stony Lane, Ambleside, just within the border-line of the ancient parish of Grasmere.

The opening days of March reveal our specimen a huge skeleton dominating the landscape and covering a great tract of the gray sky with pic-

26 Old Trees : The Stock Wych-Elm

turesque tracery ~ forks, angles, curves, dark cranky lines in varying degrees of strength erratically intersecting. Though more than one hundred and fifty years old, the tree continues healthful and vigorous, ascending and expanding, with no big companion to interfere with its freedom. The trunk measures twelve feet four inches in circumference, the diameter therefore being a generous four feet. Height (to the topmost branches, about ninety feet), armspread (extending over the beck and path and encroaching into three pastures, about eighty feet), and symmetry are very happy, such harmony, combined with the association of the fells, having the effect of bestowing a modest and retiring look. This unobtrusiveness is responsible for the lack of special notice from foot-farers. But should the tempest or the woodman doom this Elm ~ a casualty distressing to entertain ~ then would the lea appear indeed stricken.

With the advance of March, days lengthen and smiling spells increase. "Can these dry bones live?" Sun, cloud and the breath of heaven chime "Ye shall live!" Forthwith the slender "dry bones" respond to the divine Reveille, mysteriously arouse, and lift themselves somewhat. Quickening begun, unkind weather, oppose as it may, simply slackens the pace ~ it fails to arrest

progress. Flower-buds the tree over would straightway expand but for intermitting frosts and harsh winds.

At this point the behaviour of the twigs from day to day is very interesting to observe. For some months the general tendency has been drooping as if seeking the earth. Now, revived by the salute of early Spring, many of the leaders and side shoots stretch outwards, others heavenwards, whilst some continue their descent. Wakeful buds everywhere are tugging the sprigs, straining towards an opening, fain to be kissed by the sun, baptized by the clouds and fanned by the breeze. At present all looks naked, and germs, wherever cradled, receive practically an equal share of light, moisture and air. Then wherefore this feverish ado? Ay, there's the rub; the knowing babes realize that life is a warfare and bravely accept the conditions. Development being at stake, they take thought for the shady morrow ~ struggle and elbow to win a good stand: leap as it were to woo the vitalizing elements. We pity the hapless mites in obscure places. A blockade of lusty neighbours condemns them to their cells for a further indefinite period ~ until a twig snaps or other accident favours freer contact with the essential blessings; or, possibly, next or some far-away Spring they may make a dash, proving

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to all whom it may concern that any suspicion of their long tarrying being attributable to funk was ill-founded.

The feeble spark of vitality oft lingers long in dormant buds. When a tree is hewn down and part of the bole left standing many such buds embedded in the bark wake up as by magic. Hitherto, Spring and Summer, may be for centuries, all the sap (except for miserly doles) hurried past the solemn sleepers on the trunk line to appease the gyversome *Oliver Twists* squatted everywhere on the widespread maze overhead. But on demands from aloft ceasing, the aged starvelings fare gloriously, plumpen, peep from their crannies, and speedily develop into lush shoots ; hence a few Summers only are necessary to transform the stump into an umbrageous pollard.

At the close of March and during the early part of April the flower-buds (which are bisexual) burst their bonds, and the sprigs high and low become trimmed with a profusion of beautiful little rosettes. Tender potential winged seeds (samaras), more or less blush-tinged, cuddle in groups, forming as it were flower-cups ; about these upstand crowds of hair-like stalks (stamens), each topped with a fairy-bonnet (anther) ~ thousands of battalions. This head-dress, about the

size of a mustard-seed, looks too heavy for so frail a stem ; however, in reality it is a filmy shell, extremely light, with a purse-like opening underneath where golden fertilizing pollen may be shaken out by the gale or may be shed spontaneously when ripe : the year is too young to depend upon pollination by insects. Such a countless multitude of bonnets, of a rich purply brown matching the twigs' bark, is quite a captivating feature, striking the attentive eye as affording the flowers' predominant hue. As days go by the seed-flakes become more circumspect and self-reliant, gradually loosening their infantile embrace. Now, flattened out, they, huddled in little schools, wax duly, a diminutive seed bulging near the middle of each pale-green disc.

Up to this stage the blossom seems to have usurped almost all the tree's indulgence ; but as soon as the seeds are established the parent hastens to more generously nourish the leaf-buds, who are fidgeting in their swaddles, impatient to be free. Right through the long Winter the brown scales that enfold the elfins with compressing fervour have been impregnable, proof against all assailants ~ frost and snow, hail and rain, and blasts from the east. By the end of April plumes of unfurling leaves show all over the Elm's expanse. Only the blind fail to perceive this

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evidence of awakening ; however, the earlier wealth of blossom few notice owing to an unassuming appearance and subdued tones.

Each leaf, that and this,
His neighbour will kiss ;
They are happy, for that is their right !

Wordsworth.

Throughout Merry May foliage develops full speed. Enchanting is the vision of so vast a congregation of gracefully-grouped fresh lustrous leaves ~ a glory of clean tender life aquiver with joy : the “can’t-help-it” variety of joy, akin to that which urges the baa-lamb to gambol atop of the handiest hillock and the plough-boy to whistle behind his team.

Thus pleasure is spread through the earth
In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find ;
Thus a rich loving-kindness, redundantly kind,
Moves all Nature to gladness and mirth.

Wordsworth.

Not long ago the ground beneath the Elm was strewn with bud-shields, cast-offs that through the past rough months served so well as water-proofs, comforters and sanctuaries ; now follows a liberal scattering of immature seeds ~ abortives and weaklings stricken by Winter as he tardily retreats. However, snug in the foliage nestle strong survivors innumerable, sufficient (if only

they were mostly fertile) to raise a great forest of Wych-Elms in every Westmorland vale.

Ere June has far advanced the leaves (which are much larger than those of the common Elm) attain maturity, and bend down with their weight the fine and pliant and tough branch extremities, emphasizing the tree's character of a weeper. So packed and firmly set is the foliage that zephyrs, though they cheer and refresh, excite no visible emotion ; a breeze swings the tresses ~ their leaves " moveth altogeth'er if they move at all " ; whilst a storm-wind sets the branches leaping and flinging to wild sweeps of surging sound.

About mid-June the seeds are ripe, the clustering tawny flakes, ready to be wafted away by the next puff, contrasting with the masses of green. Little birds occasionally dart and flutter about the sprays, eating the seeds with relish. Larva and fly are at floodtide, therefore the tree may be resorted to for temporary change of diet, or may not the morsels possess medicinal virtue appreciated by small fowls of the air but of the nature of which we know not ? As a rule the crop is bountiful ; however seasons come that have but a scanty yield to show, or there may be absolute failure. In nine cases out of ten dearth results from cruel weather attacking at a critical stage, one discomfiture speeding on the heels of

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another ; perhaps pelting rain drenches the blossom, followed immediately by biting frost or battering hail. Vital parts of new-born flowers perish wholesale under such grievous visitations. But should the elements assault singly, and not with phenomenal severity, the doughty Wych-Elm will win through and bear seed.

Whenever the Hawthorn is seen afire with cat-haws, and the Holly with berries, the observation "A hard Winter may be expected" is heard again and again, the fond idea being that the Creator, foreknowing the bareness of many an accustomed Winter foraging-spot, has provided plenteously for His dear pickaninnies.

The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom He loves.

Wordsworth.

Through the ages a happy common Nature-faith has been evolved. That a rich wild crop is significant of favourable weather at the time of the fruit's sweetly - dressed infancy appears obvious ; inspired feeling ~ "man's far-darting reason" ~ also links it to divine solicitude for emergencies ahead.

Bearing on these ups and downs, 1913 was a very instructive year, the Summer being pro-

longed and continuously fine, a rare one for the development of fruit. Hereabout, before the preceding Winter had departed, the Wych-Elms and Hazels were as flush with blossom as ever ; unfortunately, it almost totally failed to fructify ~ no granules for the birdies, no " leemers " for " figures quaint " or cons. Untoward weather at the flowerbud-opening season was responsible for the famine. In the following Spring (1914) conditions at the perilous period were propitious ; and early-blossoming wild trees, fortified by a year's reserve of fruit-producing vitality, carried one of the heaviest Autumn burdens in living memory.

No tree of the forest is a greater lover of light and air than the Wych-Elm, as its structure indicates. From crown to butt, though crowded with limbs and branches, the distribution of leafage is such as to ensure thorough ventilation, free passage for light, and fairway to the tempest. Owing to these characteristics, grass can flourish under its shelter.

With the advent of Summer the leaves begin to assume their adult sober complexion, the vernal sheen and texture having all too soon fledged away to be seen no more until next Springtide. However, in sunshine or gloom, nude or mantled, our Elm is a familiar more to be

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desired than gold ~ a heaven-sent Messenger that charmeth all who have ears to hear with fairy-like whisperings of wondrous things : things bygone, things happening, and things to spring forth new every morning.

After a week's toil the weary mortal yearns for repose and thanks God for the benign Commandment "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy ; six days shalt thou labour." Deciduous trees also need intervals of rest. Blossom, fruit and foliage cannot be generated and sustained without exhaustion ; to restore energy prolonged sleep is essential. Therefore at the year's decline, when the Last Post blows from the fell-top, our fagged friend gladly unrobes, nods good-bye, and once more lapses into slumber.

THE NAB OAK

One impulse from a vernal wood
Will teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Wordsworth.

About three hundred paces beyond Nab Well a private track, leading to Nab Cottage on the highway side below, branches from the Rydal to Grasmere terrace. Close by the junction, where the land dips steeply, a noticeable old Oak springs from the bank. Near the ground the trunk slightly exceeds four feet in diameter; a little higher there is considerable expansion owing to the striking out of a big arm. Stature and spread are in pleasing proportion. The thick ivy encompassing the body and great limbs, the gaps in the foliation, the stumps, holes and scars, the polypodies adorning the mossy brow, and the bending attitude are a few of the haunting details of this picture of peculiar charm. In a tree of such a venerable countenance as this one the various evidences of hurts by lightning and hurricane do not strike the observer as dis-

figurements ~ rather as decorations : mementos of "far-off things, and battles long ago."

"Time, like an ever-flowing stream,
Bears all its sons away."

As regards grip upon life, the verdurous nobility of the forest show great advantage over Man. In the Spring of 1913 a fine historic English Oak, two thousand years old, was destroyed by fire. Therefore, a century before the Christian Era began, that tree's roots must have gained sure hold on the earth.

The average age of the Oak is difficult to arrive at with exactitude ; a somewhat loose estimate is demanded ~ say a range of between five hundred and a thousand years. However, given a combination of conditions favourable to health and hardihood, existence may run to more than double the common span. Here prevail the primary essentials upon which tree-longevity depend. Although the soil may be scanty it is wholesome and naturally well drained and the climate is salutary : even the wild-wind that rocks the fellside woods invigorates the Oak ~ "the firmer he roots him the ruder it blows."

Vegetable, like animal, life is ever amove, developing or wearing away. Usually the rate is determined by innate power of endurance ~ in a

short life the change from time to time is notable ; in a long life transition steals on by unperceived degrees. From prime to prostration, if the pace is not forced by accident or disease, in the case of the Oak what a wide gulf of time may be spanned !

On considering the solemn slowness of decline the imagination is roused to the suspicion that during the first half of last century some of our woodland elders resembled in a striking degree their present appearance ; and certainly Wordsworth, who loved this peaceful path, often dallied hereabout to contemplate the tattered image that now attracts us and haply to "pipe a simple song for thinking hearts." But this association, interesting to recall and seeming afar off, is in reality a comparatively late passage in the history of this tree of Nab, for on review we are led to believe that here is a thing alive that was in being during the Roman occupation of the district (ending about A.D. 410). Though bowed and frayed with dry antiquity it is still immeasurably too young for acquaintance with those awesome creatures that ranged our dales and fells in a past epoch ~ the Mastodon, the Sabre-toothed Tiger, the Cave Bear ~ but we cannot question its bowing intimacy with divers carnivores and other powerful animals long locally extinct : under its

shadow the Brown Bear and the Wolf devoured their timorous co-denizens and the Wild Boar routed for leemed acorns, whilst its bark has been rubbed by the broad antlers of the Reindeer and kindred ruminants.

When our Oak pushed its first crest of delicate leaves through the turf it peeped over a scene that in parts would look strange to present-day eyes : acre beyond acre of dense forest and thicket, swamps and lagoons in many hollows, with clearings here and there on the hillsides and flats ~ all astir with wild life, fur and feather. big and little, rapacious and gentle. An ample measure of colour and movement flitted over this Arcadian recess ; and the most arresting figures in the scene would be the fell-folk themselves, clad in skins, their only head-covering being their own bushy or flowing hair, each pursuing task or diversion in conformity with primitive habit, which doubtless possessed some features of semblance to the vagaries of those Nature - struck simple - hearts who to - day slip urban fetters and go a-gypsying.

Established by the side of an immemorial track, this tree has overlooked the coming and going of men ever since our country's Pagan age. The communities being small and scattered, cozily domiciled among mountains far from noisy crowds,

the stream of humanity would be rarely considerable; nevertheless, these roads being veritable links in the country's route-system, the daily file-past could not fail to present telling pictures of period after period. In the Oak's young days quaintly-garbed Druidical priests would be now and again conspicuous in the miscellaneous company; then "this precious stone set in the silver sea, this blessed plot, this dear dear land" having attracted the eagle-eye of Rome, the clank and tramp of alien soldiery on patrol or in force would oftentimes at this selfsame spot start rustle and cry from scared beast and bird; and, on the exodus of the martial legions, after more than three hundred and fifty years' grip, the procession would assume more and more variety as strangers entered and customs changed.

And what memorable changes! Through the Middle Ages ~ the sweep of centuries following the Roman evacuation ~ a lengthy spell of tranquillity was unknown, races and clans being wont to regulate their steps by that Nature-wide law which influenced such chieftains as Robin Hood and Rob Roy, frankly interpreted

The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

Wordsworth.

Plague and famine also cast shadows. Though **shade** appeared deep and often, Light overpowered Darkness, Christianity superseded Paganism ~ the Church took root and covered the land. In the light of local history, it is not unlikely that those two Northern seventh-century Gospel-pioneers St. Oswald and St. Aidan ~ King and Bishop ~ eyed this very Oak as they passed by.

The glory and sweetness, the tribulation and pain, of these Middle Ages move the heart whenever the General Supplication is prayed ; likewise, minds may be led to reflect on the same period by communion with this relic grasping the foundations of Rydal's beauteous Nature sanctuary ~ this surviving witness of long bygone vicissitudes.

Does our Oak look happy in her old age? Most admirers would reply offhand " Yes. What kindly support the strong ivy-bands give ; how comforting and cheery the luxuriant wrap ! What a picture of devotion ! " But are not the ivy - bands strangulation gear, the redundant glossy leaves a shroud ? The dear old Lady herself is under no illusion ~ *knows* she will soon die if not succoured. She has lived in terror for years ; lost her smile ; her features betray fright. Season after season every particle of nutriment that could be smuggled through the blockade has

been transmitted to her extremities ~ the parts farthest away from her grim embracer. These exceptional twig-extensions give the impression of flight; in her own manner she is off, as a child from an ogre. Alas, how futile the struggles and stretchings; a mouse in the jaws of a cat has a better chance of escape. A little longer, unless a Samaritan walks this way, and the agony will be over. Then nevermore at Springtide will our Oak greet us in golden raiment brand-new from glory realms ~ become a gaunt *dead* link with the past, perchance still in the clutches of her innocent-looking murderer.

How came the ivy-vine to be established at the toes of this tree? It is well known that these parasites will creep a considerable distance to attack desirable prey ~ a tree having rugged bark, into the crevices of which the stem-rootlets by the myriad may penetrate to filch food and secure tenacious hold. The sagacity and morality of plants, creepers particularly, long puzzled Nature students ~ what were the senses that guided locomotion so mysteriously? A few years ago one of our leading naturalists revealed the fact that leaves are studded with infinitely small eyes; so transparent the lenses of an ivy leaf that photographs were taken by their agency. Vision implies other high faculties. In the instance

before us victim-selection most likely originated not from the plant but from a higher agent, no other than the Poet whose home was hard by. After about eighty or ninety years of climbing, sap-sucking and strangling ivy will reach the crown of a big tree ; hence the poor sufferer pines rapidly, and a woodland stalwart that perhaps for over a thousand years has braved the battle and the breeze ingloriously succumbs to the gripe and fangs of a naughty eye-pleasing vegetal serpent.

In the Thirties of last century there was no small stir on the lovely little estate under Loughrigg known far and wide as Fox How. Doctor Arnold, the Headmaster of Rugby College, had become the proprietor and was building thereon a home for vacation rest and, as he fondly hoped, in the fullness of time, for final retirement. Here the Doctor and his friend Wordsworth spent hour after hour day after day arranging and planting. As might be expected from two such devout lovers of Nature, the abiding-place of each shrub and tree was studiously chosen. Not only were the plants considered individually and in combination one with another, but relation with the landscape was never overlooked. Absorbed, Wordsworth glided from spot to spot noting appearances and visualizing mature growth. This

proceeding greatly amused one rustic eye-witness, who to the end of his days recalled the bobbing up of a head first behind one bush, then another. Much of the sylvan beauty of the neighbourhood is an expression of the Poet's feeling. Taking one stretch only, Loughrigg side between Pelter Bridge and Brow Head, most of the wildwood and some of the garden plots owe outstanding features to Wordsworth. Well may we rejoice that he was so commonly consulted by neighbours. Thousands treasure his written thought ; we also owe him gratitude for the living poetry of this incomparable fell slope.

Perhaps this very woodland here
Is lovelier than it used to be
Because some other held it dear,
And stood and looked from tree to tree,
And loved it, long ago.

Dorothy Plowman.

This seeming digression leads up to a conjecture ~ that the botanical gifts and purchases for the dressing of Fox How grounds comprised one or two score ivy plants, some of which being taken a few yards away to the Doctor's wood that dips from the road down to the Rothay and there bedded beside Oaks and Ashes. And may not the Poet have carried a few surplus ones to favourites within easy distance of Rydal Mount, the Nab Oak included ? All the ivy now hugging

the trees indicated appears to be of the same age ~ an age consistent with the aforementioned surmise. Those responsible for the planting would be guided by their eye for the picturesque, losing sight of the predacious side of the parasite's nature.

One or two of the be-ivied trees in Fox How Wood are already lifeless, albeit some sympathiser endeavoured, may be surreptitiously, to rescue them by severing the vine-stems ~ too late ; spoiler and prey are locked together in death.

And verily the time is at hand when the Nab Oak also must give in to her enemy's merciless squeeze, and appetite ~ an appetite that claims riches direct from the soil (the birthright of the higher form) and sap from the victim's body and limbs as well.

Will any who have the power intervene while there is yet time ? If so, hearts would be made glad ; the Oak would recover her long-lost happy look and continue to provide a "harbour of delight for wren and redbreast," where they may "sit and sing their slender ditties."

Vain is the glory of the sky,
The beauty vain of field and grove,
Unless, while with admiring eye
We gaze, we also learn to love.

Wordsworth.

OLD TRAVEL-TRACKS

Lo, the Winter is past,
The rain is over and gone ;
The flowers appear on the earth ;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
. . . . Arise and come away.

The Song of Solomon.

As Springtide creeps on there is a quivering of wings preparative to flight. Uneasy as caged larks pent hearts sigh for the hills, the moor, the bush, the prairie, the ocean, or solitudes where snow and ice are eternal ; must flee thronged thoroughfares, huddled habitations, strife, and the ding-dong of communal toil and diversion, of gaining and spending.

Doubtless heredity (transmission to latter generations of ancestral vagabond traits) is operative in this mysterious communing "from earth to man, from man to earth ;" he that runs may notice its activity in the goodly company who hearken to the Call from the Wild and repair to pastoral retreats conveniently nigh or to strange scenes in other climes.

The poor man finds solace by the sands of the sea, the river side, the country lane, or in traversing paths through fields and woods, or in wandering at random over the fells or the wide wild common. The man of means often wings farther from home ~ to quietudes of Africa, Asia, Canada, South America, or the Arctic or Antarctic regions. But flee they must ~ there is a spell in the Call.

In ruder times no part of our isle was more alluring to the adventurous and lover of the chase than this lake-gemmed district ; in time present the charms of the ancient travel-tracks that web the heart of the same domain draw from afar an ever-swelling band of pilgrims who delight in ranging "ways of pleasantness" and "paths of peace" apart with Nature. Some portions of these routes are hemmed in by lichened walls rustically built with weathered stones picked up in the vicinity, other bits are open to the fell, field, coppice or moor, and here and there the boundaries are

"Hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild."

Wordsworth and his Lakeland-admiring literary contemporaries valued them as a precious heritage and tramped them oft in all seasons. Happily

they may be enjoyed by whosoever will, a common possession, without money and without price.

They are of absorbing interest. Whilst their diversified beauty gladdens the eye, many details lead to reflection on the forgotten and fading past. It was recently alleged that age-marks indicated some trees in Mexico to be four thousand years old, and the claim made that they were the oldest living things in the world. Such "oldest-living" claim cannot easily be substantiated or disproved. A number of shrubs ~ notably of the savine (*Juniperus sabina*) order ~ that adorn portions of wild land cut by these tracks are so enduring and manifestly old, "produced too slowly ever to decay," as to give the impression that they probably existed in pre-historic days. If their true age could be gauged one would not marvel to learn that some representatives run very hard the botanic Methuselahs of Mexico. A few other objects often observed from these ways are also of archæological interest. Two may be cited here ~ hogg-holes at the foot of walls for sheep to pass from one enclosure to another, a large stone, slate or other simply-movable obstruction serving as a door; and stone gate-stoops with holes for bars. Both these devices almost certainly have been used through

long, long years, from the childhood of our race onwards.

In the main these lines of communication run at a moderate height along the hillsides and cut through passes, but some boldly cross over the fells as the most direct means of linking dale with dale. For long it has been customary to associate these roads with the Romans and to assume that they constructed them. However, when the routes are considered in combination with conditions that prevailed in remoter times, few will be inclined to doubt that they are of far greater antiquity than the Roman period, being in fact the veritable paths of the primitive homelanders.

Taking lay and character of ground into account, the Romans were well pleased with the existing network of travel-tracks. With consummate insight the natives had likewise chosen the fittest localities for their fortress and watch-stations or beacons; to the Roman mind these sites were ideal, therefore they were appropriated and the rude buildings replaced by more imposing and convenient military structures.

The early occupiers would find the country as wild as the free play of Nature's forces could make it. Absence of artificial drainage would account for numerous swamps and lagoons. Food in variety and plenty could be obtained ~ veget-

ables and fruit from the garden patches and uncultivated land (crab-apples, brambles, bleaberries, bullaces, cat-haws, elderberries, nuts, etc., were customary food fruits or bases for the concoction of drinks), fish from the streams and lakes, and meat from the flocks and herds, largely supplemented from the bag of the hunter. Beside the diminutive animals and birds, the waters, woods and fells harboured an abundance of greater water-fowl, deer, boars, wild cattle and wild goats. For a lengthy period shepherds and herdsmen would have an anxious time guarding their stock from the depredations of eagles, bears, wolves, foxes and wild cats.

The old travel-tracks that remain to us appear to run along the original routes, altitude and direction being chosen to avoid quaggy ground and to negotiate difficult places. So the Romans would find a series of roads ready to hand. However, it may be taken for granted that improvements were frequently made ~ diversions, extensions, cuttings, etc. It is not difficult to discover spots that reveal Roman work. The native mind concerned itself primarily in solving troublesome problems in the simplest way. Thus a bog would be missed by skirting its margin, a rocky obstacle rounded, a stream forded. But the Roman was more thorough and direct: a bog would be

drained, a rock in the path removed, cuttings and bridges made, surfaces levelled and uniformity of width established.

Since the Roman evacuation these beaten ways were never more animated than when traversed by long strings of packhorses laden with merchandise, tinkling bells giving warning of their being amove.

The following are the chief old tracks for the most part free to the public : Nab Scar Terrace connecting Rydal and Grasmere, Loughrigg Terrace connecting Rydal with Grasmere and Langdale, Rydal to Skelwith Bridge by Brow Head and Gilbert Scar, Ambleside to Kirkstone Pass by Round Hill and Brackeney Becks, Ambleside to Langdale over Loughrigg Fell, Grasmere over Dunmail Raise, Grasmere to the West Coast by Chapel Stile, Elterwater, Wrynose and Hardknott. The road to Troutbeck through Skelghyll Woods, the one by Blue Hill to Kirkstone along Wansfell's base, and that by Woundale and High Street to Penrith, though outside the old Grasmere parish, are connections, and must be included in the same category. Of all the roads in the neighbourhood perhaps one only can with confidence be regarded as of purely Roman origin ~ that over High Street, which had a paved width of twenty-one feet. The latter mountain

highway was a link between garrison and garrison to facilitate transference and co-operation of troops. Winter experience would prove the High Street enterprise to be more ambitious than serviceable.

Love, now an universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth :
It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than fifty years of reason :
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make
Which they shall long obey :
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls :
They shall be tuned to love.

Wordsworth.



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